

1.1 Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG)

Interview Type	Personal, COG/RPC
Interview Location	KVCOG Offices, 17 Main Street, Fairfield Maine
Interview Date	November 08, 2001
Summary Date	November 25, 2001
Interviewer	AGI / Richard Sutton (rs@appgeo.com)
Interviewed:	Chris Huck, Planning Director chuck@kvkog.eddmaine.org
Staff Size (approx)	8-10 (currently a couple of vacancies)
Member Municipalities	62
Budget (approx)	
URL:	http://www.kvcog.org/kvcog.phtml

1.1.1 Agency Overview

KVCOG is a council of governments that serves communities and businesses in Kennebec, Somerset and western Waldo counties. It provides assistance in local and regional economic development and planning services, supports local governments in transportation and communications improvements, encourages natural resources preservation and facilitates more cost-effective delivery of public services among its member communities.

1.1.2 GIS Initiatives

1.1.2.1 Overview of GIS Utilization

KVCOG is presently utilizing no GIS resources in house. Benefits of the technology are well recognized and understood, but GIS hasn't managed to take hold within the organization. In the past three years, two staff members at KVCOG have been through ArcView training (at version 3.0). There hasn't been active application of the technology though, and without access to upgraded software and specific applied tasks all practical familiarity with GIS has disappeared.

1.1.2.2 GIS Operating Environment and Infrastructure

KVCOG currently maintains adequate computer hardware to operate GIS in a desktop display and analysis capacity, but isn't running GIS software. ArcView 3.0 was used 3 years ago but no one is utilizing it at present. Currently some of the GIS and mapping functions of the organization are being outsourced, primarily to Mitchell Geographics of Portland, Maine. This public/private relationship produces quality output, but contractor prices are too high to make it a viable mechanism for delivering large quantities of mapping and analysis products.

KVCOG maintains full time 56K Internet access, and is within the Adelphia service area for cable modem access. There are plans to move to broadband cable within the year. There are no large format plotters within the organization or easily accessible through local affiliations. In fact, KVCOG is reluctant to purchase large format output devices following a poorly timed purchase of a color inkjet three years ago that remains underutilized. There is ample disk storage and processor capacity to operate multiple licenses of ArcView 3.2 or MapInfo software.

1.1.2.3 GIS Data Resources and Requirements

1.1.2.3.1 Spatial Data

Presently KVCOG does not manage any digital data, though significant amounts of spatial data are monitored and enhanced by this agency. These data categories include shoreland and general zoning, parcel data, comprehensive planning mapping layers, as well as inventory maps of the characteristics and capabilities of member towns. Base and analysis layers such as Maine OGIS data, Maine DOT road lines and traffic counts and census data would be of enormous benefit to the KVCOG mission. Of the 62 KVCOG communities, the list with some GIS capability is small. These include Augusta, Hallowell, Litchfield, Waterville and Winslow. Somerset county towns to the north have negligible GIS data.

Another notable data resource is the 1979 North Kennebec Regional Planning Commission structural inventory, that exhaustively documented buildings for many towns in the KVCOG service area. This is a hard copy atlas that could at some point be scanned, registered and digitized to provide a valuable benchmark for development tracking in the region.

1.1.2.4 GIS Applications and Application Requirements

KVCOG neither uses GIS nor provides GIS services to its member communities. A small number of the member communities operate their own GIS and maintain spatial data, and KVCOG utilizes hardcopy output of these products.

Many KVCOG towns are participating in the E-911 program and updating their road inventories on a regular basis. The general consensus is a high level of satisfaction.

Planned future GIS activity and applications:

KVCOG would like to keep a GIS analyst occupied in-house, full time, providing services to member communities and performing regional analysis. These services would likely include:

- Floodplain delineation
- Predisaster mitigation
- Shoreland and general zoning mapping: To assist towns with SLZ mapping, currently KVCOG hand draws new lines on old hardcopy basemaps.
- Comprehensive plan mapping
- Regional parcel mapping and analysis
- Phosphorus loading and watershed modeling
- Municipal GIS development assistance
- Training services

Additionally, KVCOG would like to be able to maintain a number of single purpose maps for status and tracking purposes. These include maps of which towns are in what

state of zoning adoption, what the status of comprehensive planning is and where there are available digital parcels.

Monitoring growth pressure is a recognized priority. The First Park business development in Oakland, a multi-town and state subsidized commercial park, stands to create significant development pressures as it becomes populated. KVCOG recognizes the need for proactive planning and predictive modeling of the impacts of this potentially multi-million square foot commercial development center.

Conversely, encouraging growth in the region is an active function of KVCOG and having a well maintained GIS to illustrate and advertise area benefits is perceived to be of significant utility. “Selling the region as a lifestyle” is a stated objective of economic development efforts at KVCOG. GIS can be helpful here. Unfortunately as recently as two years ago there was a great deal of economic development money available in the area from DECD and other sources, though this has dried up almost entirely now.

1.1.3 Other Relevant Issues

- The problem of “two Maines” exists in microcosm in the KVCOG service area. While some of the southern, Kennebec County towns are up to speed with GIS and more advanced planning capabilities, the diffusely populated towns of Somerset county will not have adequate resources to develop GIS at any time in the foreseeable future. If they are to benefit from this technology, it will have to be supplied and funded by a regional technology center or directly from the state. It is unlikely that private sector consulting prices will be affordable to these towns.
- It is difficult to impossible for KVCOG to allocate funds to acquire technical training for any GIS professionals it might maintain on staff. Currently there is a lack of adequate work to keep a full time GIS analyst occupied. And without having an analyst on staff, there is no capacity to generate demand for additional work.
- If training is not readily available, some sort of on-call technical assistance needs to be provided, either through the state or another mechanism, to keep initiatives moving along with necessary technical tips. As an example, the town of Randolph had most of the necessary spatial data layers available for conducting its comp plan, but ended up creating the maps by hand due to the absence of adequate expertise.
- KVCOG considers State Planning Office planning grant funds inadequate to complete quality local comprehensive plans. The amounts of these grants haven’t been increased in a decade, and they don’t provide adequately for performing appropriate digital mapping support.
- It is the impression of KVCOG that Maine State Planning Office does not have an accurate understanding of the status and completion of what comprehensive plans are complete and up-to-date in the state. This is based on KVCOG knowledge that the plans from its own 62 communities, almost exclusively hardcopy and

filed on shelves, haven't been exhaustively conveyed to the SPO in its periodic status reports.

- KVCOG believes that useful GIS technical proficiency could be cultivated in the Maine Technical College system (most locally at the Kennebec Valley Technical College) or at the Capital Area Technical Center.
- The new Executive Director (Kenneth Young, Jr.) strongly supports developing full GIS capacity but is unlikely to proceed without confidence in a coordinated statewide GIS strategy.

1.1.4 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

KVCOG needs in-house access to GIS. At least one FTE working with the technology for internal as well as member-community assistance will allow KVCOG to cultivate familiarity with GIS and produce much needed presentation and analysis products on a regular basis. Delivery of this technology could be through Citrix access to Maine OGIS software and data or via standalone software and on site data warehousing. Supporting such and effort with highly accessible and accurate data at the state level will remove tedium, redundancy and analytical inefficiencies from the planning and mapping process.

Member communities who have some GIS will benefit through the additional local expertise. Those with none will be the beneficiaries of KVCOG's ability to generate map products to further local planning and analysis efforts. In regional efforts, such as predictive modeling of First Park impacts, or total watershed, multi-town phosphorus modeling initiatives, the central Maine area stands to benefit enormously from a GIS infrastructure that supports informed and cooperative planning. KVCOG could be the keystone in developing such infrastructure.